

# critical digest

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## This Week in NYC

The Prospect Park, Brooklyn, Summer Theatre project to present a series of free theatre productions with professional actors was launched by co-chairmen Supreme Court Justice John E. Cone and Dina Merrill. Kenneth Whitlock, producer of the Brooklyn Public Library and Drama Ensemble, is the founder and plans to present Equity cast members at minimum salaries eight performances per week-Jul 4 to Labor Day-at one of three sites--The Band Shell, the Music Grove or the new Wollman Skating Rink. Group will seek a city subsidy and foundation grants. Last summer Joe Papp's NY Shakespeare Festival received a \$60,000 NYC Board of Estimate grant to present free performances in Central Park.

## Plays

General Seeger by Ira Levin with William Bendix, Dolores Sutton to be presented by Ted Mann & Geo. C. Scott in Mar, directed by Scott, following Feb 12 debut in Detroit... The Classmate by L&M Bush-Fekete which was planned for Jan production by Roger Stevens has been postponed due to excessive production costs... The original typewritten draft of The Glass Menagerie was sold at the Parke-Bernet Galleries, NYC, auction for \$6000 to Univ of Virg. Barrett Library.

## Players

Russell Collins to be featured in Romulus... Fritz Weaver to make NY musical debut in All American... Francoise Rosay to co-star with Wendy Hiller, Maurice Evans in The Aspern Papers... Franchot Tone, Geraldine Page, Anthony Francoisa to co-star in The Umbrella... Polly Rowles to join No Strings.

## Drama Desk

Melvin Maddox to replace John Beaufort as NY entertainment editor of Christian Science Monitor, latter assigned as Chief of London Bureau starting Feb 1.

## NYC Calendar

All Kinds of Giants-Cricket- (162-2nd Av)- 12/18. Noel Weiss presents musical by Tom Whedon and Sam Pottle, directed by Peter Conlow with Claiborne Cary (who replaced Maureen Bailey last week), Richard Morse. Tryout at John Drew Theatre, East Hampton, NY, Jul 30.

Not While I'm Eating-Madison Av Playhouse (120 Madison Av) 12/19. David Silberman, Jr presents satirical revue with sketches by Arthur Sherman music by Arthur Siegel, directed by Warren Enters with Hal Buckley, Wisa D'Orso, Buzz Halliday.

Poppa Is Home-Gate (162-2nd Av) -12/19. Quaker Productions presents play by Dr. Monroe Schneier, directed by Robert T. Seymour with Theo Goetz, Philip Fox.

Fortuna-Maidman (416 W 42) 12/20. John Wulp & Sam Cohn present musical comedy by Arnold Weinstein adapted from Italian drama, lyrics by Weinstein, music by Francis Thorne, directed by Wulp with Gabriel Dell, Jane Connell.

Take Her, She's Mine-Bilt- more- 12/21. Harold S Prince presents comedy by Phoebe & Henry Ephron, directed by George Abbott with Art Carney, Phyllis Thaxter, June Harding.

The Ticket-of-Leave Man- Midway (420 W 42)- 12/22. William de Seta-John Grissmer present 19th century melodrama by Tom Taylor, directed by Robert Moore with Philip Bosco, Mary Harrigan.

## Broadway Business

Variety reports general improvement at most shops, though deep drop expected pre-Holiday week. Sell-outs include-Carnival, How to Succeed, Mary Mary, Milk & Honey, Shot in Dark. Man for All Seasons was \$2000 under its \$49,000 capacity.

## Off Broadway

From the Second City cast which just completed run of 87 performances at uptown Royale will re-open at "Second City at Square East", 15 W 4th St, new coffee house cabaret presenting two one hour revues nightly starting Dec 23. Lynda Seigal is sole addition to cast that played both in Chicago and on Broadway.

The Balcony run extended to Dec 31 at Circle, Thornton Wilder's Plays for Bleecker St to open Jan 11... Phoenix to present Who'll Save the Plowboy by Frank Gilroy Jan 8, directed by Dan Petrie with scenery and costumes designed by Norris Houghton... Flying Chaucer musical version of "The Old Wife's Tale" to be presented in Jan, Paul Barry director... The Anvil, a Civil War play about John Brown's trial by Julia Davis which was presented this summer at Charles Town, W. Va Court House, to be presented in spring by Charles Wood.

## Church Drama

The Curate's Play by Nathaniel Banks to be presented Dec 17-19 at St George's Episcopal Church, 16th St & Styvesant Sq with George Grizzard, Donald Davis, Jenifer Heyward.

## NY Shakespeare

NY Shakespeare Festival asked NYC Board of Estimate for \$50,000 grant to cover 80 performances of Julius Caesar for high school students this spring. Group also opened campaign to raise \$200,000 for next summer's performances in Central Park.

## Theatre Book Notes

"The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill" by Doris Alexander to be published in Jan by Harcourt, Brace.

## DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

**The Hostage** - One Sheridan Sq- 12/12/ 5 pro-Times, Herald Tribune, Post, Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- filed on revival of last season's Brendan Behan's comedy which was forced to close on Broadway after brief run due to booking jam. Revival was produced by Norma Frances, Robert Margulies, Bell Productions, directed by Perry Bruskine with Alan Nunn, Paddy Croft, Jane McArthur and Geoff Garland. All reviews filed were raves for play, players and production. They were unanimous in feeling that it is better suited to the Off Broadway theatre than it was uptown. Calta, Times, cheered the irreverent, mad, mirth-provoking production with each cast member doing a first rate job. Crist, Herald Tribune, recommended it to both those who saw it first time round and those who missed it, it epitomizes a major function of Off Broadway- to revive a worthwhile play and do it justice. Herridge, Post, agreed that it was more congenial downtown, and picked McArthur and Garland as being better than the original cast members. Nadel, WTS, enjoyed raucous and hairy production of a raucous and hairy play. McClain, Journal American, who vetoed production last Sept, joined rave parade this time. It belongs Off Broadway where it is expertly and enthusiastically presented by a skilled cast. Many moments that were tasteless on Broadway are inoffensive Off Broadway, he concluded. News and Mirror have not yet filed reviews.

**The Apple**- Living Theatre (530-6th Av) 12/7. 1 pro-Post- and 6 con- filed on Jack Gelber's new play added to repertory of Living Theatre, directed by Judith Malina with Julian Beck, James Earl Jones, Fred Miller, Marilyn Chris. Sole affirmative vote was for interesting theatrics, rather than for full understanding of the new work. Negative majority rated it confusing, boring, senseless. Two reviewers (News and Journal American) left before the play's end. Pro voter Watts, Post, reports that the production of Gelber's baffling conundrum is added proof of the gift for theatrical excitement possessed by the Living Theatre, the cast play it with such vitality that it never ceases to be interesting and alive. Watts isn't sure but he takes it that the play is the author's own private and esoteric version of *The Iceman Cometh*. Con voter Taubman, Times, labeled it a way-out essay in free association, experimental theatre with a vengeance which is difficult if not impossible to make sense out of. Though director has filled the evening with vivid theatrical images, Times man thinks author has tossed an unconscionable amount of nonsense into his mixture. Kerr, Herald Tribune, admits he is a failure because he didn't hate play as author intended him to. Instead he found it here and there juvenile, sometimes derivative, and lacking in inspiration. Davis, News, who left after the first act of the piece that was ugly in conception, writing and execution, and Coleman, Mirror, who nominated it for the season's booby prize, both marked the fruit rotten. Nadel, WTS-panned it as crashingly boring, dull, aimless. Journal American reviewer McClain filed his con notice in double-talk, the only words in English stating he left after the second act. Four days later he explained in his column that he figured if Gelber could dish it out, he ought to be able to take it. Listing his reasons for disliking the production he blasted Gelber for not having the faintest notion of play construction nor a way with words, an original young bore.

**Black Nativity**- 41st St (125 W 41) 12/11. 6 pro- no News review printed- filed on "Christmas Song Play" by Langston Hughes, presented by Michael Santangelo, Barbara Griner, Gary Kramer, directed by Vinette Carroll with dancers Clive Thompson and Cleo Quitman and gospel singers The Stars of Faith and Prof Alex Bradford's Singers. Critics split in their approval. 3 raves were filed for the entire program from Mirror, Post, World Telegram & Sun, reviewers. 2 vetoed the first act dance sections, while 1 raved second act gospel songs and panned dance opener. Coleman, Mirror, applauded the Negro oratorio in modern terms, an exciting blend of text, spirituals, dance and hymns. Watts, Post, cheered the beautifully happy and giving spirit expressed, a matter of zest and uninhibited joy. Nadel, WTS, also picked joy as the word to describe the program. Taubman, Times, rated the dance section as amateur, but approved of gospel section. Kerr, Herald Tribune, also disliked dancing, but okayed the program.

**Gezunt un Meshuga**-Casino (Phoenix -12th St & 2nd Av) 12/9. 3 pro- Times, News, Post- filed on Israeli revue with Shimen Dzigan presented for week-ends only by Far-bend (Labor Zionist Order). Shepard, Times, enjoyed the visiting quartet of Israeli comics in their briskly packaged show of jokes, songs and dances. He warned that it was all in Yiddish, with no English lines at all. Silver, News, recommended unpretentious amusing show. Rosenberg, Post, approved of the diversified, entertaining program.

**The Grand Vizer and Cayenne Peppers**-De Lys- 12/12. Esterow, Times, approved of two French avant garde playlets by Rene de Obaldia, adapted by Howard Hart presented at Greater NY Chapter of ANTA Matinee series for one performance only, directed by Robert Cordier with Stephen Hart, Barry Primus. Both plays were interesting, performed by first rate actors, though often the images are not always clear... *This Way to the Tomb* -Union Seminary (120th & Claremont)- 12/8. Calta, Times, filed a mild con vote on new religious drama written and directed by E. Martin Browne, presented by student casts. The play he termed wordy, ambiguous and self conscious, while the student actors were not up to the cerebral drama.... *To Wake The King*- Joan of Arc High School (1954 W 93)- 12/14. Nadel, World Telegram & Sun, approved of new children's play by Samuel Citron presented by Jewish Theatre for Children. Production of new play is professional and smooth. Play will be repeated Suns at 2 30 PM.

### NYC Future Calendar

First Love-Morosco 12/25...Ross- O'Neill- 12/26...Subways Are for Sleeping- St James- 12/27... Night of the Iguana- Royale 12/28...Madame Aphrodite- Orpheum 12/29...Captains & Kings- Playhouse 1/2 ... World Next Door- 1/3...Something About a Soldier -Ambassador- 1/4...Moon on Rainbow Shawl- East 11th St- 1/8 ... Romulus- 1/9...Who'll Save the Plowboy-East 74 1/9 Plays for Bleecker St- Circle 1/11...Giants Son of Giants- 1/11...Cantilvered Terrace- 41st St 1/17...Absence of a Cello- 1/18...Banker's Daughter- Jan Hus- 1/22...Passage to India- Ambassador 1/31.



GREEN  
ROOM  
DEPARTMENT



PROS & CONS BY TMK

**UNANGRY YOUNG WRITERS...** The British theatre of protest is dying out Robert Shaw, playwright-novelist-cast member of *The Caretaker*, told the Dec "Drama Desk" meeting. The term "young angry dramatists" is a terribly, loose, lazy newspaper term covering many diverse playwrights. The Royal Court once the center of the revolt dramas has now become "The establishment" in English theatre. A playwright, Shaw explained, can only write two or three plays in anger, he then becomes successful, is resigned in his anger and must find new targets. John Arden and Harold Pinter may be the two good writers to come out of this period, he predicted.

**BROOKLYN DRAMA...** Prospect Park offers as many advantages to incipient theatre-goers as any other, the same starry sky for a roof and verdant slopes for wings, the Herald Tribune editorial commented in applauding the new free theatre project. The group's request for city subsidy may be just a bit premature, but the paper is delighted that Brooklyn is renewing with such zest its interest in the finer things of life.

**COLUMN TIPS...** Noel Coward would like Genevieve to replace Elaine Stritch, *Sail Away*, when latter opens in London edition, hears Wilson, Post... Martha Raye's new musical to be about Polly Adler, whispers Kilgallen, Journal American... How to Succeed Actors Fund Sun performance this week drew 8000 requests for the 1300 tickets available, notes Lyons, Post.

**MID SEASON VIEWS...** Shows illuminated by a special kind of fervor for freedom recommended by Nadel, World Telegram & Sun. Not all have been inspiring, but their motivation and purpose are... Foreign playwrights and actors have dominated the first half of the season, charts Chapman, News... Just great is how McClain, Journal American, sums up the Broadway season so far. The success of the serious plays of import and stature is regarded as an especially heartening trend.

**LINCOLN CENTER SEATS...** Christmas greeting card from Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts featuring a B. Tobey cartoon showing Santa in the role of gift counselor telling a shopper--"But he doesn't have everything unless he has a seat plaque at Lincoln Center" filed by Post editorial writer under items he never finishes reading... Fox, World Telegram & Sun, reports the \$1000 donors who will have plaques include --Tony Perkins, Dina Merrill, Josh Logan. Over 1000 seats in the various Lincoln Center Theatres have been ear-marked for plaques.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...** Pre-Christmas period is good time to buy seats for everything but the five sell-outs, suggests McHarry, News... McClain, Journal American, deserves an award for writing the season's most original review, nominates Watts, Post... Trust teen-agers with plays and musicals that differ strikingly from the reary routine they encounter on TV and films, urges Taubman, Times.

**SECOND BALCONY...** Kean and *The Caretaker* experiments of \$1 second balcony tickets have been successful, producers told Morgenstern, Herald Tribune. Frederick Brisson, *The Caretaker*, will consider the possibility of dollar tickets for any play he produces in the future, at least one of his productions next season will have them.

*The Hostage* is still exciting theatre on half a dozen levels, presented by an excellent group of uninhibited British and American performers many making their NY debuts. It is a wild and funny comedy, a topical musical revue, a serious anti-war drama, a political commentary on the 20th century and its chances for survival, a mad take-off on diverse avant-garde phonies and a collection of vaudeville jokes and blackouts. Though the current cast lacks the distinct ensemble playing techniques of the Joan Littlewood production which made the comedy seem spontaneous, the revival shows how well-constructed the Behan script really is.

*The Long Voyage Home* and *Diff'rent* twin bill of early O'Neill plays is an excellent start for Paul Shyre's O'Neill repertory program at the comfortable, handsome Mermaid Theatre. The short curtain-raiser reveals the harsh power and the talents for creation of interesting characters by the young author. The longer play is still an exciting, shattering production, brilliantly acted. Together the two playlets complete an evening of vital theatre that must not be missed by any theatre buff within travel distance.

*The Gondoliers* is a delightful rendition of the Gilbert & Sullivan King-size poke at the always timely problem of status. The American Savoyard company is, as always, in splendid voice. As there isn't a serious dramatic moment in the still funny script, they are more than passable in the acting department.

*The Story of Mary Surratt* Equity Library Theatre revival was an often moving, always interesting production of the 1947 John Patrick play. In spite of a vastly uneven cast of 35, Kate Wilkenson in the title role was very convincing. The ovation she received from a tiny Mon evening audience was deserved, as was the revival of a fine play that only lasted nine performances on Broadway.

Both Prospect Park and Central Park are pretty big places. Each could handle six professional theatre productions at the same time with slight trouble. If one free production in the park is deserving of public support, then six in each park must be even more important. Worthwhile production units could win foundation and other private support. Poor production units could be dumped in the convenient lakes.

Mrs John F. Kennedy's power as the First Lady of Culture was demonstrated at the UN this week. She simply ordered ten boxes of UNICEF cards of a certain design. Within a week the entire stock of over 1 million was sold. She is probably being kind to the Arena Stages by not becoming a subscriber of the Washington repertory company. The theatre seats 750 and an avalanche might occur if she even attended one of their productions.





OUTER  
BROADWAY  
THEATRE  
LETTER

College Theatre

Princeton Univ. Triangle Club opened 70th annual production Tours de Farce at McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ prior to national tour ... Clark College, Vancouver, Wash, presented The Last Stop by Hermine Duthie ... Univ of Missouri, Columbia, to present Dinny and the Witches directed by John Robert Lloyd, NY set designer... E. Bradlee Watson, 82, founder of Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, Experimental Theatre, died in Anacortes, Wash.

Winter Repertory

Mineola, NY, Theatre project to bring professional theatre to Long Island suburbs failed with theatre returning to films. Season opened Sept 20 with the Phoenix double-bill of Hamlet and Androcles and the Lion, followed by Taste of Honey, Invitation to a March, NY City Ballet and NY City Opera. Producer Frank Calderone will seek union concessions before he tries again, he told Rogers, Herald Tribune. Week-end business was fine, but mid-week orchestra tickets were difficult to sell.

Charles St Theatre, Boston, to present The Fantasticks Dec 27. Current is The Maids with Carol Teitel ... Chicago cabaret theatres "Second City" and "Playwrights at the Second City" have exchanged playhouses with Alarums and Excursions revue at former and double-bill of The Maids and The Zoo Story at latter... Simone debut at Cleveland Playhouse switched to Jan 31, John Ramondetta and Jenny Hecht featured... Two for the See Saw with George Montgomery and Shelley Morrison to be presented at Vine St. Theatre, Hollywood, Dec 29.

Summer Playhouses

John B. Kelley Playhouse in the Park, Philadelphia, announced contest for original one hour long plays for children. Winning script will get \$150 and production next summer.

Melody Top Theatre, Chicago reports \$30,000 advance sale for Jun 4 opening with Carousel.

Shakespeare

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, London & Stratford-on-Avon, to make 16 week US tour next fall. Six week NY stand (probably at City Center), Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, Toronto are already scheduled. John Gielgud, Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft will head repertory company of 50 in a Shakespeare play to be chosen, The Cherry Orchard and The Devils by John Whiting.

Canadian Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Ont, to open Jun 18 with Macbeth, The Tempest and The Taming of the Shrew, with Cyrano de Bergerac joining repertory Jul 30. Christopher Plummer will return to star, though his roles not yet picked.

American Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Ont, student program to open Apr 30 with Henry IV, Part I and Jun 5 with Richard II. \$2 student matinees will be presented prior to regular season opening Jun 16 with Richard II and Jun 17 with Henry IV, Part I.

Road Shows

The Best Man second company opens Jan 8 at American Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Conn with Don Porter, Scott Brady, Tom Gorman. The raked stage and shell background for Shakespeare productions have been dismantled for touring company... Bea-Ography one woman show with Beatrice Lillie to start national tour in Jan, directed by Marc Connelly.

London

English Stage Company to present its first Shakespeare production A Midsummer Night's Dream Jan 14, directed by Tony Richardson ... The Doctor and the Devils by Dylan Thomas to be presented in spring ... A Time to Laugh with Ruth Gordon and Robert Morley to be presented in Feb, directed by Tyrone Guthrie... The Unsinkable Molly Brown to star Janis Paige.

Paris

Les Violons, Parlois... by Francoise Sagan drew warm audience response opening night, Reuters report ... Living Theatre production of The Apple invited to Theatre of the Nations festival.

Europe

Oliver to be presented in Amsterdam... Spanish government to give \$300,000 theatre subsidy next year to four groups, including new national theatre company in Barcelona.

Asia

US National Theatre \$500,000 playhouse in Singapore to be completed Dec 1963... Baird Marionettes to make 15 week tour of India, Nepal, Afghanistan starting in Jan, sponsored by US State Dept. They will present Davy Jones' Locker and The Magic Onion.

Current Road Tours

Captains & Kings-Locust, Philadelphia 12/11

Giants, Son of Giants-Playhouse, Wilmington 12/21

Night of the Iguana-Blackstone, Chicago 12/25

Something About a Soldier-Colonial, Boston 12/18

Advise & Consent-Wilbur Boston- 12/4

Best Man-Shubert, Cincinnati- 12/18

Bye Bye Birdie-Fisher, Detroit- 12/18

Carnival-Toronto, O Keefe 12/11

Far Country-Alcazar- San Francisco 12/18

Fiorello-National, Washington 12/4

Gypsy-Auditorium, St Paul 12/18

La Plume de Ma Tante-American- St Louis 12/11

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week, "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.



